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SUBJECT: MOD'S AMOS GILAD ON ABBAS AND EGYPT

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones. Reasons: 1.4 (b,d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Israeli MOD Political-Military Bureau Chief Amos Gilad told A/S Welch and the Ambassador June 6 that Israel could help PA President Mahmud Abbas the most by staying quiet. Welch stressed the importance of supporting President Abbas and working to help the Palestinian people avoid a humanitarian crisis. Gilad said that, during his recent trip to Egypt, GOE officials expressed concern over increased U.S. pressure to rapidly democratize the region, but also said that Egypt wants to do whatever is necessary to ensure stability in the region, including limiting the transfer of money to Hamas. Gilad also observed that Egyptian officials appeared nervous about a nuclear Iran and he said they will not tolerate it. DefMin military advisor, MGEN Eitan Dangott, also attended the meeting and explained the circumstances surrounding the June 2 shooting at the Israel-Egypt border in which two Egyptian police officers were killed. END SUMMARY

GILAD ON SUPPORTING ABBAS AND HELPING THE PALESTINIANS

12. (C) A/S Welch asked Gilad what the GOI could do to support President Abbas. Gilad mentioned the possibility of providing rifles and ammunition. He claimed that the GOI has maintained quiet on the Gaza and West Bank borders and has not overreacted to reports of terrorist activity. (Note: He did not refer to the continuing targeted assassinations and military operations in such places as Ramallah, Nablus, and northern Gaza.) He also said that the GOI has worked to prevent money from reaching Hamas. He explained that it would not be helpful for the GOI to openly support Abbas, and that creative ideas about how to assist the Palestinians should come from the Arab world and not Israel.

13. (C) In response to A/S Welch's suggestion that Israel release frozen PA funds to Abbas for specific purposes, such as keeping the Karni crossing open, Gilad replied that Israel must remain very cautious about how openly they assist Abbas. Gilad added that Israel could help the most by staying quiet.

14. (C) With regard to the general state of the PA, Gilad said that while Hamas is more organized in Gaza, Fatah is more organized in the West Bank. He predicted that Abbas's idea of a referendum will inflame the situation in Gaza even further because Hamas is not succeeding in government and appears terrified of the idea of a referendum.

GILAD: EGYPT CONCERNED ABOUT REGIONAL STABILITY

15. (C) Gilad reported that on his recent trip to Egypt, GOE officials expressed concern over increased U.S. pressure to rapidly democratize the region. Gilad said that Egypt fears that this pressure threatens its stability and that a policy that encourages development and economic growth would be better. He added that he understands this concern because "stability is more important than anything."

16. (C) Gilad said that Egyptian officials told him that they want to do whatever is necessary to ensure stability in the region, including limiting the transfer of money to Hamas. The GOE officials also reaffirmed their interest in causing Hamas to fail and their willingness to train the PA Presidential Guard. Gilad estimated that only 700 members of the Presidential Guard -- 500 in the West Bank and 200 in Gaza -- are operational, although another 1,000 are on the books. He said that the GOE wants to take part in training these soldiers in order to strengthen President Abbas. He added that Egypt is ready to upgrade its presence at the Rafah crossing.

GILAD: EGYPT WILL NOT TOLERATE A NUCLEAR IRAN

17. (C) Gilad observed that his Egyptian contacts appeared

nervous about a nuclear Iran, adding they will not tolerate it. In response to a nuclear Iran, he predicted Egypt would take a drastic step, such as pursuing its own nuclear program.

GOI INVESTIGATES SHOOTING AT ISRAEL-EGYPT BORDER

18. (SBU) MGEN Dangott said that both Israel and Egypt are investigating the border clash between IDF troops and Egyptian police officers that left two of the Egyptian police officers dead. Dangott explained that at approximately 0700 hours on Friday, June 2, three Egyptian police officers fired on a small IDF unit conducting surveillance along the Israel-Egypt border. The IDF unit retreated and returned fire, killing two of the police officers. When it was discovered that the men were Egyptian police officers, the IDF immediately contacted GOE officials. Dangott said that forensic evidence showed that the police officers were 50 meters inside Israeli territory when killed. The fact of their presence inside Israel quelled initial Egyptian suspicions of Israeli hanky panky and helped manage the issue. GOI investigators plan to meet with their Egyptian counterparts in a few weeks to review their findings.

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JONES